

II. AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims is a courtesy copy; no claims have been changed via this amendment:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for receiving an alert code in a commercial transaction, comprising the steps of:

using a transactional device ~~used~~ for a making payment in a commercial transaction; and receiving an alert code attached to transaction data for the commercial transaction indicating receipt of a message personally directed from a third party sender that is not involved in the commercial transaction to a user of the transactional device, the contents of the message being independent from the commercial transaction, wherein a transactional clerk is alerted regarding the existence of the message via an audible signal.

2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

contacting a message center with the message, prior to the using of the transactional device; and

receiving a transaction request, after the using of the transactional device.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 2, further comprising the steps of:

attaching an alert code to transaction data in response to the transaction request, the alert code being based on the contacting of the message center prior to the receiving of the transaction request;

sending the alert code attached to a transaction code; and
retrieving the message in response to the received alert code.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the retrieving step comprises the steps of:

contacting the message center;
providing a unique identifier; and
retrieving the message from the message center.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the retrieving step comprises retrieving the message from the third party sender.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the transactional device is selected from the group consisting of a magnetic device, and a machine-readable code containing device.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the alert code is unrelated to the commercial transaction.

8. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the alert code is appended to ~~the a~~ transaction code that indicates whether the commercial transaction is approved or declined.

9. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the alert code is prepended to ~~the a~~ transaction code that indicates whether the commercial transaction is approved or declined.

10. (Currently Amended) A method for receiving an alert code in a commercial transaction, comprising the steps of:

contacting a message center with a message from a third party sender that is not involved in the commercial transaction;

using a transactional device in a commercial transaction;

identifying an intended recipient of the message;

attaching an alert code to transaction data for the transaction, wherein the alert code is unrelated to the transaction;

alerting a transactional clerk regarding the existence of the message via an audible signal;

receiving the alert code attached to the transaction data; and

retrieving the message in response to the received alert code.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the retrieving step comprises the steps of:

contacting the message center;

providing a unique identifier corresponding to the intended recipient; and

retrieving the message from the message center.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 10, wherein the retrieving step comprises retrieving the message from the third party sender.

13. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the transactional device is a magnetic device.

14. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the attaching step comprises appending an alert code to transaction data for the transaction.

15. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the attaching step comprises embedding an alert code to transaction data for the transaction.

16. (Canceled).

17. (Currently Amended) A system for receiving an alert code in a commercial transaction, comprising:

a message reception system for receiving a message from a third party sender that is not involved in the commercial transaction;

a recipient identification system for identifying an intended recipient of the message based upon use of a transactional device during a commercial transaction;

an attachment system for attaching an alert code to transaction data for the transaction;
and

a message transmission system for transmitting the received message, the transmitting including an alert to a transactional clerk regarding the existence of the message via an audible signal.

18. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the message reception system records the message, and wherein the message transmission system plays the recorded message.

19. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the recipient identification system identifies the intended recipient based upon a transactional device identification.

20. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the alert code is unrelated to the commercial transaction.

21. (Original) The system of claim 17, further comprising a subscription system for the intended recipient to subscribe to a message service.

22. (Currently Amended) A program product stored on a recordable medium for receiving an alert code in a commercial transaction, which when executed, comprises:

program code configured to receive a message from a third party sender that is not involved in the commercial transaction;

program code configured to identify an intended recipient of the message based upon use of a transactional device during a commercial transaction;

program code configured to attach an alert code to transaction data for the commercial transaction; and

program code configured to transmit the received message, the transmitting including an alert to a transactional clerk regarding the existence of the message via an audible signal.

23. (Original) The program product of claim 22, wherein program code configured to receive the message records the message, and wherein program code configured to transmit the received message plays the recorded message.

24. (Original) The program product of claim 22, wherein program code configured to identify the intended recipient identifies the intended recipient based upon a transactional device identification.

25. (Original) The program product of claim 22, wherein the alert code is unrelated to the commercial transaction.

26. (Original) The program product of claim 22, further comprising program code configured to allow the intended recipient to subscribe to a message service.